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Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 022934

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 022934

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BUENOS AIRES 0718 SENT SECSTATE DATED JAN 30.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 0718

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AR
SUBJ: RUMORS OF MAJOR CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT

REF: BA 0576

1. THERE HAVE BEEN AN UNUSUAL NUMBER OF RUMORS DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF MAJOR CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT. SPECULATION SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TOUCHED OFF PRIMARILY BY 1) MRS. PERON'S UNEXPECTED MOVE LAST WEEK FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL RESORT AT CHAPADMALAL, WHERE SHE WAS SPENDING A WORKING VACATION, TO A NAVAL BASE NEAR MAR DEL PLATA, AND 2) FACT THAT THE NATIONAL NOTARY PUBLIC, OR SCRIBE, IS WITH HER. ONE RUMOR HAS IT THAT MRS. PERON TRIED TO FIRE LOPEZ REGA AND THAT HE THEN ABUSED AND THREATENED HER, THUS PROMPTING HER TO MOVE TO NAVAL BASE WHERE SHE HAD PROTECTION OF NAVY CINC ADMIRAL MASSERA, IN WHOM SHE OBVIOUSLY HAS GREAT CONFIDENCE. STILL OTHER RUMORS ATTRIBUTE MOVE TO SECURITY REASONS (ERP HAD PENETRATED CHAP-
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PAGE 02 STATE 022934

ADMALAL), TO POOR COMMUNICATIONS AT CHAPADMALAL, ETC. STILL

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

OTHERS HAVE IT THAT MRS. PERON HERESELF IS PREPARING TO RESIGN.

2. OBVIOUSLY, MAJORITY OF THESE RUMORS ARE WITHOUT FOUNDATION, OR, AT LEAST, ARE EXAGGERATIONS. BUT THERE IS A FEELING EVEN AMONG BALANCED, KNOWLEDGABLE POLITICAL OBSERVERS THAT SOMETHING IS IN THE WIND. THERE IS ALWAYS POSSIBILITY OF ROUTINE CABINET CHANGES (E.G. OTERO OUT), WHICH WOULD IN THEMSELVES EXPLAIN THE PRESENCE OF THE NATIONA SCRIBE. FURTHER, LABOR LEADERS CASILDO HERRERAS AND LORENZO MIGUEL SAW PRESIDENT YESTERDAY (JAN 29) NAD MAY WELL HAVE PRESSED HARD FOR REMOVAL OF COMMERCE SECY ALLOATTI, WITH SHOM CGT IS FEUDING. CONFRONTATION BETWEEN CGT AND ECON MINISTER GOMEZ MORALES OVER THIS AND OTHER ISSUES APPEARS TO BE BUILDING. NONE OF THESE POSSIBILITIES HOWEVER WOULD SATISFACTORILY EXPLAIN THE MOVE FROM CHAPADMALA. CERTAIHLY, INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA'S EXPLANATION YESTERDAY (I.E. THAT SHE HAD MOVED THERE TO FIND GREATER TRANQUILITY) RAISES MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT ANSWERS. SHE COULD NOT BUT HAVE HAD MORE PRIVACY AT CHAPADMALAL THAN AT NAVAL BASE, WHICH ADJOINS CROWDED PUBLIC BEACH.

3. MANY OBSERVERS ARE CONVINCED THAT QUESTION OF LOPEZ REGA'S POSITION IN GOVERNMENT IS SOMEHOW INVOLVED. EMBASSY HAS NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT THIS IS THE CASE. AFP REPORT FROM SPAIN JAN 28 QUOTING GEN FRANCO'S SISTER AS SAYING LOPEZ REGA IS A HATED POWER-HUNGRY RASPUTIN IS INTERSTING IN THIS REGARD, HOWEVER. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT PILAR FRANCO WOULD HAVE MADE THIS STATEMENT APROOPOS OF NOTHING. SHE HAS WIDE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND CONTACTS IN PERONIST MOVEMENT, AND WE HAVE LITTLE DOUBT BUT THAT ATTACK ON LOPEZ REGA WAS INSPIRED BY ONE OF THEM. IF SO, THIS, ALONG WITH BALBIN REMARKS OF JAN 23, REPORT THAT ARMED FORCES COMMANDERS HAD RAISED ISSUE, AND STRONG STATEMENT FROM UCR SECRETARY ENRIQUE VANOLI JAN 29 CRITICIZING CREATION OF "SUPERSECRETARIAT" (READ,LOPEZ REGA), WOULD SUGGEST THAT A CONCERTED EFFORT AGAINST LOPEZ REGA IS BEING LAUNCHED. EVEN IF THAT IS THE CASE, HOWEVER, IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN LATTER IS ON THE WAY OUT. SO FAR, HE HAS MANAGED TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF HIS DETRACTORS. NONETHELESS, CRITICISM FROM A FIGURE SUCH AS PILAR FRANCO, WHO IS IDENTIFIED IN THE PUBLIC MIND AS AN OLD AND HONORED FRIEND OF GENERAL PERON'S, CANNOT BE SHRUGGED OFF LIGHTLY BY LOPEZ REGA.
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4. WHETHER OR NOT THERE ISANY FIRE BENEATH THE HEAVY SMOKE CREATED BY THE LATEST SPATE OF RUMORS (AND EMBASSY IS ENDEAVORING TO DETERMINE IF THER IS), THE NATURE AND RAPIDITY WITH WHICH THE RUMORS ARE ACCEPTED REFLECT FACT THAT MRS. PERON'S SUPPORT IS ERODING AND ERODING RAPIDLY. AS UCR'S VANOLI PUT IT YESTERDAY, MANNER IN WHICH GOVERNMENT IS NOW CONDUCTING ITSELF MAKES IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR UCR TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT IT. MILITARY

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TOO, IS BECOMING DISENCHANGED AND LABOR UNIONS ARE BEGINNING TO
ASSERT THEMSELVES INCREASINGLY AT EXPENSE OF POLITICAL WING OF THE
PERONIST MOVEMENT, ANDTO SOME EXTENT AT EXPENSE OF GOVERNMENT.
SITUATION IS THUS BEING CREATED IN WHICH SOME KIND OF CHANGE
SEEMS LOGICAL, WHETHER IT BE CABINET SHAKEUP OR SOMETHING MORE
SERIOUS; HENCE, RUMORS SUCH AS THOSE OF PAST FEW DAYS LIKELY TO
BECOME RECURRING PART OF POLITICAL LANDSCAPE.
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